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ritories of fertile land to give to the landless. To be sure, the vast majority of the landless could have land to-day if they would go where it is. But, as we know, they do not want land unless it comes in the form of a corner lot in a big city with a big house on it. But the Anti-Poverty Society has declared that the landless must and shall have land, and so we will suppose it bought for them. Perhaps when they understood that they would have a perpetual claim on the income of the Society so long as they remained poor, they would consent to occupy the land which was decided to be their share, simply as gentlemen of leisure. But inasmuch as the Society would sternly refuse to help them the moment they became well-to-do, we may be quite sure that they would not work much; for if they worked, they might happen to become well-to-do. And then they would not only cease to be protégés of that human Providence, the Anti-Poverty Society, but they would be making some other men poor. For rich men necessarily imply poor men, in the present order of things.

It is true that, with such an income as we are considering, an Anti-Poverty Society could do much to diminish vice and crime. It could, for instance, buy up all the intoxicating liquors of the world, and hire the manufacturers not to make any more. But that would not stop the drinking habit. In some way, the men who wanted liquor would either make it or get it in spite of the Society. Or, again, the Society could establish and endow a large number of agencies for the education and reformation of the people. But even that would not bring on the millennium. Human nature would continue to be about what it is to-day—composite in its character, with the good and the bad so inextricably woven together that they can never be entirely separated.

What our doctrinaire social reformers would value most highly would be the opportunity to give the "under dogs" in our social life a chance, by giving them their "share" of the world's good things. But when it came to applying this glittering generality to concrete cases, they would get into trouble at once. For instance, do the men who run up our immense national drink-bill deserve any more money than they already get? As a matter of social ethics, do they really deserve the money they now earn? Then as to the immense number of men in the world with very slender abilities, or with no abilities at all, ought they to get as much as the men with great abilities? Still again, would it be either good policy or good morals to give anything out of a general fund to the great army of lazy and vicious men and women? And lastly, supposing that some little junta of social reformers were able to-day to make an absolutely equal division of the property of the world without any reference to the individual endowments of men, how long would it be before the old inequalities would again appear?

I started out with proposing a plan for abolishing poverty. But, after all, I find that my scheme will not work. Instead of abolishing poverty, it would make everybody poor, and not only poor but hopeless. An autocrat, or a committee of autocrats, with an absolute power to control and distribute the wealth of the world, could do little or nothing to put an end to the inequalities between men. On the contrary, by their unwise, though well-meant, interference with the great laws of social economy, they would soon impair, if not destroy, the whole structure of civilization.

JAMES B. WASSON.

## V.

### "THOUGHT-TRANSFERENCE."

IN A recent article in THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW—"The Open Gate of Dreamland"—I narrated some observed facts of hypnotism, which had led me to the belief that mind-reading and all forms of "thought-transference" were delusions. Dr. Post in a later number traverses my conclusion, and suggests that it "may be premature," and founded on my not having witnessed phenomena observed by others.

With this position I have no controversy, for towards the unknowable—or perhaps it were wiser to say the unknown—I am an agnostic. But you will permit me to add

that, since writing the article in question, I have tried other experiments strongly tending to confirm its conclusions. I have dipped into "mind-reading," and have myself, found hidden articles and done things which had been secretly agreed upon by other persons, one of whom accompanied me with his hand upon my forehead. The key to ascertaining the purpose was, of course, successfully observing and interpreting the muscular impulse. I found the thing secreted, or did the thing described, unerringly and with considerable alacrity, exactly as water finds its level by flowing in the direction of the least resistance. I have no doubt that anybody with quick sensibilities can do the same thing, and, after a little practice, with as much readiness as any professional muscle-reader in the field. But the Barkis who officiates as companion in the experiment must be "willin'."

So much for that. When Dr. Post postulates that "the muscles belonging to one body may be controlled by the mind belonging to another," I have only to say, "Prove it." When I am told that the indulgence in profound and vehement thinking on the part of a nurse kept a patient from vomiting, I am inclined to say, "Maybe the patient would not have vomited any way." When I am told that a mind-reader who had been secretly "willed" to kiss a young lady felt an almost irresistible "contraction of the orbicularis oris" on approaching her, I have only to add that one swallow does not make a summer or one pucker a universal law.

It should be remembered that many of the observers of "thought-transference" seem to be rapid generalizers, and that rapid generalization is fatal to scientific accuracy. In fact, I think the skeptical mood is the one in which all investigators should approach both hypnotism and "mind-reading," and that they should not only remember that coincidences explain most of the mysterious in human life, but that research should proceed on the identical lines that would be followed if it were known that all the persons concerned were dishonest, and were bent on the perpetration of fraud.

As to Dr. Post's defence of physicians, I have only to say that while the medical societies of the United States decline to investigate hypnotism, much less practise it, most doctors take pains to condemn the practice of it by "laymen," and only the other day I was advised by one of the most distinguished physicians in the country to "give it up," and he predicted dire evils if I should persist in experimenting with hypnoses. As the advice was not paid for or even solicited, it may at least be assumed to have been sincere.

W. A. CROFFUT.

## VI.

### PROTECTION FOR OUR LANGUAGE.

THE English language as spoken by the American people is subject to great and rapid changes. Among a people so little conservative every one seems to feel at liberty to coin words and take liberties with his mother tongue. The varied foreign elements pouring into our country from every nation under the sun, the extent and variety of our territory, the vast sectional industries carried on, the cosmopolitan and migratory character of our people, their omnivorous habit of taking intellectual pabulum from all nations and languages and tongues—all these are constantly transforming our language. While these things may prevent a tendency to distinct dialects and serve in a measure to knead our language into a compact whole, yet they keep pouring into the mass an endless variety of new elements, and thus it is at the mercy of an infinite number of fluctuating forces.

It is of interest to every American that the language in which the English classics have been written shall be kept as pure as possible, and that all changes shall be made with the greatest care. In no way can this be so well accomplished as through an American Academy of Language. No other means will so effectually secure unity, prevent sectionalism, and abolish dialects. No mere dictionary-making, whether by one man, one university, or a committee of men, can secure the greatest permanence, breadth, or unity to a language. When the standard of a language is left for the individual lexicographer to establish, sectionalism will at once come in. The West can complain that it is controlled by the usage or dictum of the East, or vice